

Proposed statement by the President for his news conference
September 13, 1962

A statement was issued this week by an official agency of the Soviet Government regarding the situation in Cuba. The statement addressed itself to "the governments of all countries and world opinion." It thereby labelled itself clearly for what it was--propaganda. I will not dignify it further.

If the Soviet Government has any serious views to convey to us on this or any other problem, there are well-established and widely recognized channels for that purpose. We suggest it use them.

Now, as for Cuba, I know it is very much on the minds of all of us, of the Cuban people, and of our other friends in the Americas and elsewhere. Let me describe briefly how it looks to us at this moment.

Soviet shipments to Cuba, including arms and electronic equipment as well as food and other supplies, are continuing on a substantial scale. The number of Soviet civilian and military advisers has not markedly changed from the last reported figure--about 3,500. (Possible sentence on new aircraft.)

We are following these developments with the closest attention. But it is clear that right now the military strength of Cuba does not represent a grave threat to the security of
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this country. Should that situation change, our policy and our actions will change to conform. And I hope there will be no misunderstanding of that determination in Havana--or in other capitals.

We do not set out to destroy governments just because we do not like them. Nor are we going to undertake hasty or ill-considered actions, the inevitable or likely outcome of which would be large-scale armed conflict. We have acted, as you know. We have fitted our actions to the danger as we assess it. I trust, however, that this restraint will not be mistaken for indecision or lack of will. I have said before that we will do whatever is necessary to protect our own security and the freedom and independence of our friends. I repeat that most solemnly today.

Now the kind of force that represents a serious threat to a powerful nation like ours is very different from that which might well cause concern for one of our smaller, less powerful neighbors--in the Caribbean or farther south. It is understandable, then, that apprehensions have grown in other American states as the pace of Soviet military support for Cuba has increased. There is real concern that a Soviet-backed Cuba could become a base for subversion and aggression against one or more neighboring countries.

Those who might be considering such action should be reminded of the unique ties of tradition and formal agreement

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that bind the nations of this hemisphere. This tradition began with the Monroe Doctrine of the last century. It has since been expanded and refined--by the Rio Treaty of 1947, by the Charter of the Organization of American States, by the Caracas Resolution of 1954, and just this year by the agreement at Punta del Este. In these varied agreements, the nations of this hemisphere are pledged to oppose the extension of alien power into this part of the world and to help each other in defense against such an extension of foreign control.

We stand behind the pledges undertaken in those agreements. Where requested, we will act with our friends; where necessary, we will act alone.

To reduce any chance for misunderstanding, let me list some of the things we are not prepared to see happen while we sit idly by:

--We are not prepared to permit a nuclear weapons capability to be delivered into hostile hands in this hemisphere.

--We are not prepared to see Cuba become a base for overt aggression against any of our friends.

--We are not prepared to see Cuba become a supply point and headquarters for expanded Communist penetration and subversion in neighboring countries.

--We will react promptly to any unprovoked attack against our personnel or any U.S. establishment, ship or aircraft.

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Short of this kind of provocative action--which we could not ignore--we are confident that internal forces can be trusted to deal with Cuba's future and with her foreign-supported masters. Each passing day produces more dissatisfaction among the Cuban people who are suffering the combined burdens of dictatorial rule and inefficient management.

Cuba's economy is in shambles. Even massive aid from the Soviet bloc has failed ~~the~~ to halt the downward spiral, the shortage of goods, the falling standard of living. The growing burden of armaments and foreign technicians only compounds the difficulties.

The Cuban people will not indefinitely tolerate or obey the misguided leadership that has brought them economic chaos and social misery. Deprived of their right to speak out or to express themselves in the privacy of the voting booth, the Cuban people will one day vote in their own way. They will show how they feel about the foreign ideology and the dictatorship that have been imposed on them.

Should those in Cuba who reject Communist bondage decide to replace the ruling clique that does not speak for them and to establish a true government of Cuba, this Government stands ready to recognize it. We are ready to provide prompt economic assistance. We will insure that such a free government can resist any attack from outside powers.

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We look forward to that day--to the day when the Cuban people are masters in their own country; when they are free once more to work with their friends in this hemisphere; when they and we are moving forward together in prosperity and freedom.

One final word, and then I will take your questions.

It may be the Communists' hope that the Cuban problem will divert us from our broader concerns. They should not be misled, or be guided by misjudgement of this country, its temper, and its determination.

We are concerned with Cuba, of course. But we are alert to every threat to the frontiers of freedom. We are ready--now and in the future--to stand by our commitments to our friends and to all free men--in Berlin, in Viet Nam, and wherever the safety and independence of free peoples are threatened.

Nothing would be more welcome to the Communists than our becoming so obsessed with one problem that we lose sight of others more dangerous and more urgent.

We do not intend to let that happen.

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